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The Catholic Art Quarterly

Official Bulletin of the Catholic Art Association
Printed four times a year, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Michaelmas cycles,
at St. Cloud, Minn., with ecclesiastical approbation

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President's Page

IDOLS AND ICONS

THE English Catholic painter Philip Hagreen was sending an icon which he had made to a friend in America; however, the customs authorities refused to allow it to enter the United States as a work of art because it bore no signature. They suggested that he sign the icon in order that it might enter duty-free as a work of art. Philip refused to sign it, maintaining that a signature on a religious painting is sacrilegious. But to avoid making his American friend pay a large duty, and yet not disfigure the holy picture, Philip wrote his name lightly in pencil on the back of the panel.

We agree with Philip, and for a long time have intended to speak about the congruity of signatures. This whole matter of publicity, exhibitionism and signatures has completely got out of hand, nor is it an exaggeration to say that the work of art rapidly is assuming a secondary position while the artist is becoming the focal point of interest. Nowadays the story of the artist's life, his struggles, his places of study, the things and people that influenced him, his preferences in games, what breakfast food he eats; all are becoming more important than his artistic product.

Something is clearly wrong. Every artist who is in tune with his times is appreciative of this messy business of publicity and signatures. His first ambition is to acquire an individual style which will clearly distinguish him from all other artists, and he envies those successful ones who have acquired a distinctive style or theme song. In the world of commercial art a highly personal style is far more appreciated than sound graphic and plastic skill, for most artists feel that these last can easily be acquired later. The manner of doing eclipses what is being done.

This struggle for individuality is of course nothing more than a reaffirmation of the spirit of secularism begun in the Renaissance, during which time the creature was exalted at the expense of the Creator. We are acquainted with the names of artists chiefly since the Renaissance, for it was in that time that man began to publicize himself and his new found "liberation." No longer did the artist need to make his work to exalt God; instead, under the specious excuse of a religious theme, the work could

be made to serve, not God, but the artist himself. This aberration has grown into cancerous proportions today when it is imperative that works be signed, and that the history and biography of the artist be known. Increasingly the important thing is *who* sings and not the song; *who* paints and not the picture; *who* preaches and not the sermon.

In the spirit of our times historians, archeologists and art chroniclers deplore the anonymity of the gothic architects and builders, of the early Christian mosaic makers, the Medieval stained-glass craftsmen, the Byzantine iconographers, etc. These historians and archeologists keep to their never-ending search for names and biographical minutiae, always hoping to come upon a lost bit of information which will supply a gap in their knowledge. The search is in vain, for those earlier craftsmen, builders, and iconographers had the real notion of making as the handmaid of religion and not as a perverted end in itself. Those early makers understood well the relation of the artist to his Creator. Their service was dedicated to God, and in their minds it was sacrilegious to attempt to bring fame and praise to themselves and thus to subtract from the honor and glory due only to God. Actually every effort was made to keep the work within an accepted mold or tradition. All individual idiosyncracies were studiously avoided and rigid conventions were upheld not for the suppression of art but in order that the product might serve its proportioned end. Today many people still contend that such limitations of theme, pattern, color and so on, were in restraint of artistic output. On the contrary, a strict definition of the limits of the thing to be made tended to greater and greater artistic perfection simply because the artist, being required to stay within these limits, had to do considerably more creative thinking, and far less technical showing-off.

All in all it was a tremendously healthy discipline which preserved not only the integrity of the thing made but the integrity of the maker. It was a virtuous circle, based upon humility, whereby the artifact and artificer disciplined each other. The thing was better made because its material, function, and manipulation were respected, and the maker was purified by the rigid discipline of the formal, final, and material causes. We have only to look at the art output of the present day to realize the truth of this assertion. Ever since the Renaissance the artists have been clamoring increasingly for less and less limitation, and in fact today in the so-called 'purer' arts there are very few restrictions. Yet contemporary artists, unfettered by discipline, do not succeed in surpassing the earlier Faithful craftsmen. There is nothing which can take the place of the right kind of inter-aural sweat, or hard creative thinking, and all things considered the more of this expended the greater is the work of art.

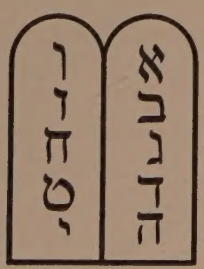
There are those who contend that anonymity will lead to indifferent technical performance and shoddy produce. Among pagan and secular artists this contention is undoubtedly true. But among true Christians it cannot be so. If we, as Christians, sign our works of religious art (and all of our creative effort should be religious if not in theme certainly in content),

we are reasserting the blasphemous anthropocentricism of the Renaissance by calling honor and glory to ourselves in place of allowing that honor and glory to go to its one, rightful owner, God. Those of us who will relinquish the foolish secular glory derived from idol-making will undoubtedly lose in the goods of this life, but our integrity as icon-makers will be upheld and the honor of God affirmed.

Our enemies, ignorant of our ends, will claim that we are relinquishing responsibility for our artistic output when we refuse to sign our works of art, but, as Christian iconographers, we know better. For we know that we are participants of a consecration which by its very intention will not be unholy in the eyes of God. Moreover we can never offer to God—who is witness to our innermost thoughts, let alone our deeds—an ill-made icon. Every stroke, every chisel cut, each artistic judgment and creative expression will be a considered entity done to the very best of our ability with no cheating and 'fudging'. All superficial flamboyance and *tours de force*, technical dexterity and artistic 'showing-off' will be absent from our work, and eventually creative effort will be returned to its rightful position in the hierarchy of things as the submissive handmaid of God and religion.

The result of such artistic consecration is a foregone conclusion. This is the secret of the ages of Faith which was lost when the Faith was diminishing in the Renaissance, when the theocentric ideal was being supplanted by the anthropocentric blasphemy, when the artist began to worship himself in place of God.

Philip Hagreen, in refusing to put his name on a holy picture, acted as an intelligent man and a true Catholic. Of how many of us American Christian artists can the same be said?



Changes on the Advisory Board

Since the publication of the last issue of the Quarterly there have been changes on the Advisory Board.

Due to the pressure of his other work which he felt prevented the proper carrying-out of his duties as adviser, Dom Damasus Winzen O.S.B. has regretfully sent in his resignation. His place on the board has been filled by Mr. Walter Shewring, who needs no introduction to readers of the Quarterly, to which in the last five years he has contributed *Education in an Abnormal Society*, *Art and Work and Reform*, *Book Learning and Education*, *Considerations on Eric Gill*, and finally, in the Pentecost issue for 1945, his truly magnificent *Art in Christian Philosophy*. During the war Mr. Shewring has been working as an agricultural laborer on Eric Gill's farm in England, but expects before long to return to his former work of teaching at Ampleforth College.

Dr. Paul Hanly Furfey is the priest member of the board.

Mr. Carey has been appointed Chairman of the advisory board.

The Central Altar

by E. M. Catich and A. G. Carey

THERE is nothing whatever in the nature of an altar that implies that it should be anywhere but in the middle. It began as a table around which people sat and partook of the consecrated bread and wine. It remains that thing. (Eric Gill, *Mass for the Masses*, Orate Fratres, July 1939).

I

The question of the proper location of the altar in a Catholic Church may be approached from two points of view. First we should understand as fully as possible the theological and metaphysical principles that are relevant to the problem, in other words the traditional symbolism. Second, we should see how, in actual practice, and in conjunction with the various accidents of history, these principles have been materialized, or given bodily shape. It is evident that in periods of intellectual vigor we may expect a more perfect expression of symbolic truths than in periods of intellectual lassitude. We do not owe equal reverence to the historical precedents of all historic periods. But the witness of history is not, therefore to be treated lightly. Both ideal principle and actual practice must be seriously studied.

Nothing need be said in explanation of the historical part of this essay, except that most of the material of which it has been built has been taken directly from the quarry of the Catholic Encyclopedia, by reference to which it can easily be checked. A word or two, however, concerning the theoretical approach is perhaps in order.

We hope that it is unnecessary to stress the fact that this is not an attempt to justify a dubious Catholic practice, by appealing to even more dubious pagan ideas and precedents. The symbols to which we refer are part of a common human heritage. They have been used by pagan worshipers as well as by Christians, just as pagans have used prayer, sacrifice, almsgiving and recognize the four Cardinal Virtues. These are not false because pagans have believed in them. The traditions to which we refer are part of the intellectual inheritance of all mankind. They are in fact less pagan than Christian, as we shall attempt to show, in that, when given expression by Christianity, they reveal a fuller meaning than they elsewhere show. "For the rest, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever honorable, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever lovable, whatever of good repute, if there be any virtue, if anything worthy of

praise, think upon these things." (Phil. IV, 8.)

And let us not be afraid of the word "cosmic" as if its use were the sole prerogative of woolly-minded pantheists. The cosmos is merely the great order of God, the universe, His great arrangement, Creation in its larger aspect. He created the universe that we know, and established the terms within the limits of which we know it. Although He himself is outside of and independent of space and time, He made our minds subject to these limits. Time, the temporal aspect of the Cosmos, He fitted us to understand under the limits of the three tenses:—past, present and future. The spatial aspect, He fitted us to understand within the limits of the three dimensions, height, width and depth. But He gave us sufficient intelligence to understand that He Himself exists in an Eternal Present, and that He Himself is the Seventh Ray, the point from which all dimensions emanate and to which all refer. These are among the cosmic aspects of things, the broad basis for the consideration of any part of the material universe.

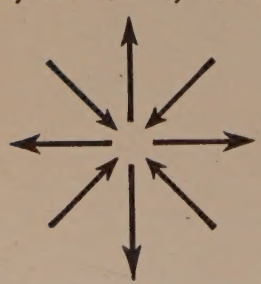
We shall limit ourselves to a brief consideration of the traditional ideas which are associated with the circle, with orientation and axes, and with the doctrine of the seven rays.

II SOME TRADITIONAL PRINCIPLES

The Circle

The dictionary defines *Altar* as "a structure or place where sacrifices are offered in religious worship. In the Christian Church, the communion table." Definitions of the word *center* always refer to the circle of which it is the center. Kevtpov is originally a sharp point, the point of one leg of the compass, or the nail from which the radial line is stretched. It is "that about which a body rotates, hence a point of concentration, or a point from which things emanate." And a circle, of course, is "a closed plane curve, all points of which are equidistant from a point within, called the center."

From these definitions it would seem to follow that a central altar is a place of sacrifice, which also partakes of the nature both of a point of concentration, and of a point from which things emanate. It might be symbolized by the figure in the margin, where arrows converging on and diverging from the central point express the reciprocal action which is implicit in the definitions. Interest in anything cannot be indefinitely sustained without some return of value. And we cannot indefinitely receive without expressing some interest in that from which we receive.



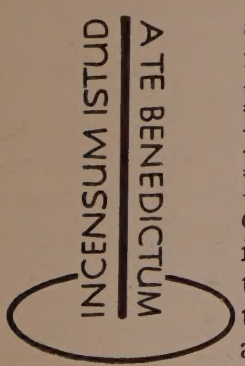
That which draws all things to itself and at the same time gives out itself, is Love. Dante, in the Vita Nuova, relates how Love personified appeared

to him in a dream, speaking these words: "Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simile modo se habent circumferentiae partes: tu autem non sic. "(La Vita Nuova, XII.) "I, (Love) am as the center of the circle, to which all parts of the circumference bear an equal relation: but with thee it is not so." Love is explaining to Dante why Beatrice failed to return his salutation. The critics seem to have been unnecessarily baffled by the passage. The love of Love is reciprocal, but the love of human creatures is not necessarily so.

One of the most ancient human symbols, if not actually *the* most ancient, is the "sun-wheel" or mandala. It consists of a cross within a circle. It goes back to a time thousands of years before there were any mechanical and material wheels in existence, and appears in cultures, like the aboriginal culture of North America, where the mechanical wheel had not yet been invented. It is found at all periods and in most parts of the world. Its basic idea seems always to be that of protection of some holy thing from profanation. The cross represents the holy thing walled in, and the circle the rampart which excludes the unholy.

The words "precinct" and "profane" express the idea. The precinct is that which is girded around as with a girdle—prae-cinctum—; the profane, or that which is before the sacred precinct, being left outside. The cross represents the sacred fane itself, and the circle the line of separation between it and the world of profane things beyond.

It may be interesting to note that the pattern followed by the celebrant in incensing the host and chalice consists of three crosses and three circles. Repeating: "Incensum istud a te benedictum ascendat ad te Domine," he first makes the three crosses, and then immediately makes the circles in the same place, continuing: "et descendat super nos misericordia tua." Whether or not there is any intended connection here between the prehistoric and the Christian symbols, the pattern is the same. Nor does there seem to be any discordance of meaning. The sun wheel symbolizes the protection of some holy thing from profanation. The smoke of incense symbolizes prayer. "Incense, with its sweet smelling perfume and high-ascending smoke, is typical of the good Christian's prayer, which enkindled in the heart by the fire of God's love, and exhaling the odour of Christ, rises up a pleasing offering in His sight." (Amalarius, *De Eccles. Officiis* in P.L., CV). Just before the actual consecration, the celebrant prays God to make the oblation acceptable to Himself so that He may accept it. It can be acceptable only by being walled off in some way from the

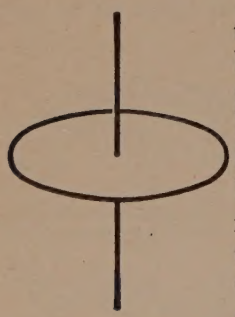


world of ordinary things. This is his prayer. Three "Sunwheels" of smoke, arising to the Triune God, seem a perfect symbol.[1]

The original and primitive idea is found in a degenerate form in various magical or diabolical rites. A "charmed circle" is scratched upon the ground, and the magician, standing safely within it, is able to converse with evil powers without being harmed by them.[2]

The psychologist Jung has held that the symbolism of the sunwheel is something that lies deep in the nature of the human mind as such. He describes not only the universality of the true symbol, but a distorted form of it produced by modern psychiatric patients. In the case of these latter, a dot rather than a cross usually stands for the center, and that which is protected is not some holy thing outside, but the poor suffering ego itself within. The normal and the abnormal forms have this in common, that in either case the center is the precious something, and the circle the wall that guards that something from danger or profanation.

More specifically Jung believed that the traditional sunwheel represented "the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise." (Gen. 11, 9 and 111, 3.)

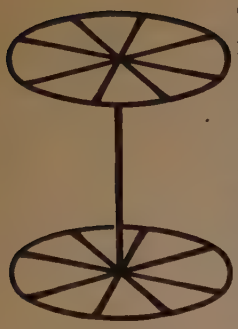


The tree is "the point" of the Eden story, standing for the condition to happiness, and the disobedience which brought earthly happiness, to an end. The tree is the point upon which all the action of that great drama turns. It is the cardinal fact, the hinge, on which the fate of human beings hinges or hangs. Looking at the symbolism three-dimensionally, we say that this hinge is not a point but an axis. It is about this axis that everything rotates. It is the straight shaft of this primordial tree that is at the center of the Garden, the holy place of God's friendship. Man refused the condition of this friendship—obedience—, and a wall of fire, traced with the point of the angel's sword, "turning everyway" prevents him from returning to his state of felicity. The circle prevents fallen man from profaning the holy precinct.

One of the most basic human symbols is this of the Universal Axis, the line which connects and separates Heaven and Earth, God and His

1—The primitive form of the Hebrew letter TETH, has the same figure as the sunwheel. In the earliest Greek alphabets it occurs unchanged as THETA but later is written with a dash, or a mere dot, at the center, instead of the cross. In the form with the dash, it comes down to us at the present day.

2—It is conceivable that some childrens' games, where a circle is scratched on the earth, may be dim reminiscences of ancient religious or magical practices.



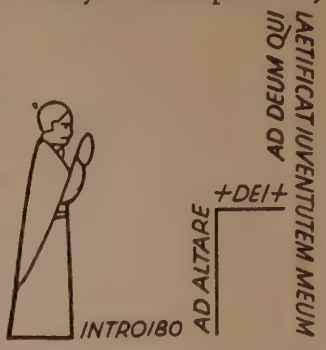
Creature, man. That relation is, for man, the most important of all conceivable relations. It is the line that connects the center of the circle on earth with the center of the wheel of Heaven. On earth a circumference is struck about a sacred precinct. The circle takes its meaning from the center and therefore emphasizes the center. It is a line *all points* of which are equidistant from the single point within. This point carried directly upwards in a line to the zenith, where it connects with the center of the wheel of Heaven, is the only thing that matters. For every race, every city, every family, it is in a different locality, but for each, wheresoever on the surface of the globe he may find himself, the spot under his feet is the center or navel of the universe; and the vertical axis, that which connects him to God.

The Horizontal Axes

A rabbit can live very contentedly under a brush pile, which is a chance conglomeration of branches and twigs without any architectonic principles of planning. All he requires is protection from cold and wind and from surprise by enemies. His needs are entirely on a physical level. But when a man comes to build it is necessary for him to arrange his materials in a more orderly way, and this requirement inevitably means that he must establish some axis on which to arrange his work. Any rectangular building, and even a round one, cannot be fully humanly planned without reference to orderly considerations of length and width.

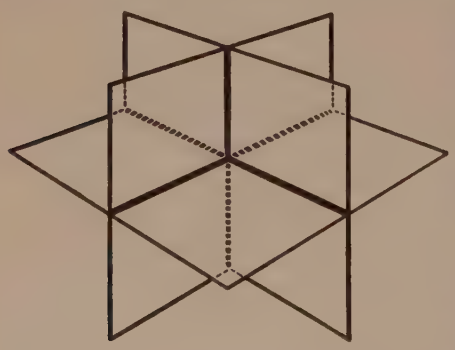
Another condition of the builder's art is this: He must undertake to construct not only something that will function, but also a thing that will look as if it would function. For example, a house should not only be firm but should look firm. A stair should not only *have* enough head-room, but should appear to have enough. Only thus is the mind served by the building as well as is the body. So, a farm house should look like a farm house, and a bank like a bank, as well as be farmhouse and bank. His axis should, therefore, as much as possible, explain the function of the building. The principal axis of a Christian church not only should exist but should be emphasized for this reason. There are two. One is the horizontal line connecting the chief entrance with the altar. We enter the church by the door, and we proceed to its chief point. This then is the main horizontal line. The second axis is the line from the altar to the zenith. The action at the altar is all vertical, prayers and incense ascending, graces and light descending.

The introductory words of the mass explain well the nature of these two axes, being written thus: The church has always made perfectly clear her wish that these two axes should be emphasized, and that the horizontal axis should be oriented East and West. That the orientation of churches is today much neglected, not only in crowded cities, where there is some excuse for it, but in country churches where there is absolutely none, is unhappily true but has no bearing in our argument. We are not here discussing what is done, now or formerly, so much as what should be done. The horizontal axis can hardly be related to the points of the compass, unless they are emphasized enough to be noticeable. Of course in practically all Christian architecture, they are so, by the Nave (E and W) and the Transepts (N and S).



The Seven Rays And The Cartesian Coordinates

The student of analytic geometry is probably unaware of the symbolic history of the principles with which he deals. But space as extension in three dimensions is an idea much older than Descartes. Apparently from the most remote times, the "cubical nature" of space has been understood. "The angel who was speaking to me had a rod of gold for a rule, to measure the city. . . . Length and breadth and height are everywhere equal." Apoc. 21, 16. From any given point of orgin each dimension may be extended indefinitely in two opposite directions, and we get thus six directions raying out from this point of origin and thus embracing every part of the universe. Descartes' contribution was the substitution of three mutually perpendicular planes for lines, so that the position of anything in the universe could be determined in relation to these planes, and therefore to their one common point of intersection. This central point of origin was traditionally thought of as the "seventh ray" and is obviously the entity which gives meaning to the rays or planes emanating from it. All else is a manifestation or epiphany of the central point to which all is referred and without which all would be meaningless. The six-rayed star is thus a perfect symbol for God, and this symbol has been used in many parts of the world.



To take an aboriginal American example, the Indians of our South West constantly use the Swastika to symbolize the four points of the compass. "Some-times the four points were used. Again the North, East, South,

West and Here. (five points) Still again seven points North, East, South, West, Up, Down and Here. Here was the all important point." C. F. Whitney, Indian Designs and Symbols, 1925, p. 10.

A sacred science of analytic geometry would include this symbolism within its scope. A secular science naturally neglects it. Everything that fills space, that is the whole *material* universe, is a manifestation of God. Space is defined as extension in which objects may exist or move. It is that which has dimensions, i.e. is measurable, especially three dimensions.

On the occasion of the discovery of the bodies of SS. Gervasius and Protasius, St. Ambrose said in a sermon: "The Triumphal Sacrifices are to be placed where the propitiary sacrifice of Christ is celebrated. Upon the altar is He that suffered for us all; beneath the altar are they who were redeemed by His sufferings." Perhaps he had in mind the words of the Apocalypse, "I saw there beneath the altar, the souls of all who had been slain for love of God's word." Had St. Ambrose added that *above* the altar is He to Whom the sacrifice is offered, we would have established three points (so to speak) on the vertical axis. Had he gone still further and pointed out that those who offer the sacrifice (Priest and people) are in the horizontal plane around the altar, he would have completed the symbolical picture.

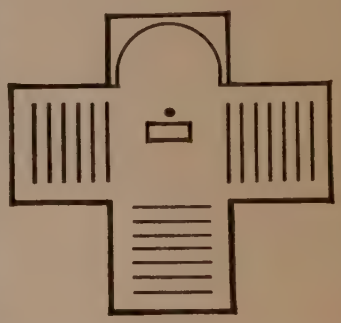
Let us repeat. The mensa of the altar is the cover of the tomb in which lie the relics of the saint. On the surface of the mensa is spread the corporal upon which Christ will be present. Above the altar is God, to Whom the Sacrifice is offered, to Whom prayers and incense rise, and from Whom light and graces return, "Incensum istud a te benedictum, ascendat ad te, Domine: et descendat super nos misericordia tua," and "Dirigatur, Domine, oratio mea, sicut incensum, in conspectu tuo."

Christ is the person of the Blessed Trinity who assumed our humanity. Christ therefore is in the horizontal plane, the terrestrial or human level. He is God, but not God for the moment considered as in Heaven above nor in Hell beneath, but on the earthly plane among His fellow men, God incarnate, again with His brothers and sisters, in their midst, surrounded by them, as he said He so often wished to be, as a hen surrounded by her chickens. (Mat. 24, 37 and Luke 12, 34.)

But how should the worshipers, the celebrant and assistants be disposed

in this plane? There are four possible places where the "circumstantes" can stand, from which they can try to see the central action. If the celebrant faces across the altar towards the entrance of the church, as was formerly the custom, people can take positions with advantage directly in front of him and on his right and left. But those behind the celebrant would be able to see very little of what he is doing, hardly more indeed, than the average worshiper can see in one of our churches today, arranged as we usually arrange them. Behind the celebrant is no place for the people, for this—the apsidal end of the church—is the precinct reserved for the celebrant, the liturgical assistants, the choir, and the sacristy. The people however, can see from both sides and the front considerably better than from the front alone, for the simple reason that if all are in front, two thirds of them are behind one-third, and one-third behind two thirds.

The centered arrangement seems to relate the sacrifice of the mass to the facts of three-dimensional space in a logical way. The Father in Heaven is above and the relics of the Saints below the central point, at the center of the top surface of the mensa. The East-West axis traverses the same point, as does the North-South axis. Behind the altar is the priest. In front of it and on both sides are his people. The Eucharist, which gives its meaning to the whole affair, is at the point where the three axes cross. Without the Reality at this point Catholic worship would be little different from that of any other good religious people. It would simply lack that which makes its worship distinct from all others, and unique.



We said that the architect is under the necessity of making not only buildings that will fulfill their functions, but buildings that seem obviously and manifestly to fulfill their functions. Why should the axes of a Catholic Church be an exception? The symbolic axis are present in the nature of space and of Christian tradition. The architectural axes are there also: apse, nave, transepts, tomb and dome. Why should these axes not coincide? What sort of a symbol is it where the physical object and the analogical meaning do not quite match? The whole point of the symbol is that they should match.

(To be continued)

Liturgical Drama

by Mabel C. Livingston

THOUGH many people have deplored the low standard of dramatics in Catholic schools and parishes, and though many suggestions have been offered as to how this regrettable condition can be improved, none has had any marked success. Interest in dramatics is wide-spread, and experiments are continually being made involving lavish expenditure of time and money, without any basic, practical, permanent plan of work, and without any definite aim or objective being adopted and established.

To work without an ultimate aim and objective is disastrous.

Wherever young people gather, sooner or later someone says. "Let's give a play," and it is extraordinary the amount of hard work undertaken and faithfully and zestfully carried out, in service to the demands of the chosen production. There is no difficulty in awakening the interest of the young people; the difficulty is in directing this seething energy and enthusiasm into creative channels.

This is the task of the dramatic director, a task demanding both wide and specialized knowledge and above all dedication. But the most gifted and devoted dramatic director cannot accomplish anything of permanent value unless he is working towards some objective, some high standard of achievement, some definite plan, covering a number of years and involving the co-operation and support of many of the parish groups and of the clergy.

Is there anywhere such a plan in operation? Alas—no!

Where are we to look for guidance? To the commercial theater, to the cinema? Unfortunately, our modern commercial theater does not truly represent drama, but has degenerated into mere "show". Too often audiences are offered only lavish sets, trick lighting effect, salacious dialogue and frankly prurient situations. Modern taste has been blunted, if not vitiated by the

false standards of Broadway and Hollywood, and the inanities of radio programs.

Are these the standards for amateur dramatics in Catholic parishes?

This is not an academic question. Youth must be served, and the universal response to drama, the universal hunger for drama seems to point the way. In wisely directed dramatic activities shall we not find the practical way, the obvious way, to convert the emotional energy now going to waste, or spent in futile devotion to some idol of the day—like Frank Sinatra—into constructive channels of artistic and creative achievement?

We know that to work without an ultimate aim and objective is disastrous. We know that neither Broadway nor Hollywood can help solve our problem.

Let us look back into the history of the Church and we shall find the answer, the way out of our difficulties.

Long years ago, in the days of a United Christendom, Mother Church taught her children the lessons—the truths—of faith through mystery and morality plays. These plays and pageants were "acted out" by the people themselves, under the direction of the priests, at the great feasts of the liturgical year.

The same plays were repeated year after year, the players as anonymous as the monks in the choir stalls; thus drama was used for worship, and the pilgrims who came to the great cathedral shrines (to celebrate the feast days) accepted the mystery and morality plays as part of the religious celebration they came to share.

We cannot bring back the past, but we can be guided in our efforts to organize the activities of a modern parish by considering the use that Mother Church made of drama in the earlier days—to teach her people. That is history—But granting that we accept drama as the God-given tool ready to our hand, the question still remains how we can use it to the best advantage.

Perhaps that question has already been answered for us; the value of the educational use of drama was proved anew some years ago by the success of the Educational Theatre for Children and Young People of the Jewish alliance on Canal Street in New York City.

The directors of the Jewish alliance had organized a dramatic club not only to keep its young people off the streets and out of the local saloons and pool-rooms, but with added objective of teaching the foreign population of the neighborhood proper English and the amenities their new dignity as American citizens demanded. The result was a successful civic experiment of extraordinary significance.

The Tempest was the first play produced with costumes, props and scenery all made by the Theatre Group, consisting of young working people of the neighborhood with only evenings free to give to rehearsals.

For five years the people of the neighborhood, crowded the theatre Saturday and Sunday afternoons and evenings to see and hear Shakespeare's Tempest, Twelfth Night, A Midsummer Night's Dream; Mrs. Burnetts' Little Princess and Lord Fontleroy, and many other fine plays, all acted and staged by local talent.

The names of the players did not appear on the programmes—only the names of the characters in the play; whoever played the leads on Saturday helped out as a member of the crowd on Sunday, and other players stepped into leading parts for the two Sunday performances.

The Tempest was such a success that the doors of the Jewish Alliance were stormed by young people clamouring to join the Theatre Group.

The older boys and girls enrolled eagerly in the classes in dramatic speech and action and Theatre arts that were started, while the children crowded the story-telling and story-playing classes. The first performance had been such a success and had set such a high standard, that rigid tests had to be met before the coveted membership in the Dramatic Club could be achieved. Membership in either cast or staff groups—as players or technicians—, a high honor, was eagerly sought

after notwithstanding that the *names of players never appeared on the programs!*

For five years! At the end of five years the Educational Theatre for Children and Young People was closed at the demand of the saloon keepers of the neighborhood who invoked the Sunday closing laws and the Child Labor Law, to refill their bar-rooms, that attendance at the Theatre had kept empty Saturdays and Sundays. That too, is history.

(NOTE: See article "The Childrens' Educational Theatre" by A. Minnie Herts in the Atlantic Magazine, December, 1907.)

That there is now as always a mysterious, God-given potency and power in the drama was proved again, in our own times, by the achievements of the Childrens' Educational Theatre on Canal Street.

Where is the vision and courage to adopt and adapt these lessons from history to the needs of a modern Catholic parish?

Surely it is possible to re-establish the old value of Liturgical Drama. With vision, patience and time a five year plan carried out with enlightened devotion should unite the recreational activities of the parish into a functioning organism as vital and far reaching in its influence as was the work of the Theatre on Canal Street.

We know that Mother Church relied on the power and potency of drama to teach her children, yet today, the traditional use and value of this method of teaching seems to be forgotten, though it was universally used in the early ages. To be sure there is generally a dramatic club in a modern parish, encouraged, or merely tolerated for its entertainment value, and bracketed with the glee club and debating association; having no longer any liturgical significance and lacking enlightened leadership, the highest achievement of the parish dramatic club is often limited to a yearly minstrel show.

From an honored place in the ritual of the Church, from the cycles of Christmas plays, and Easter plays of the great abbeys to minstrel shows is indeed a far cry, and several centuries lie between.

The records of this change are dim, but seem an accomplished fact at the time of the Reformation.

In those calamitous days, we find the mystery and morality plays with the addition of comic interludes being presented in the market places by companies of players and without benefit of clergy.

Mother Church was so angered at this debasing of drama, so long her treasured method of teaching, that the sacraments of baptism and marriage were denied the player people. They could not be buried in consecrated ground. Even for Moliere there was no relenting. This to is history and the rigor of the penalty proves the importance that Mother Church attached to the proper use of drama.

There is great need now for a vital restatement of the eternal truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith, is it not possible for the Church to use drama, as of old, for this purpose? Drama for worship and education owing allegiance neither to Broadway nor Hollywood, but living up to its own high destiny.

Easter, an etymological note.

by Graham Carey

It has been said that there is an appropriateness in the fact that the convention which we held just after Easter should have been held in the East. It is a pun; a rather unusually feeble pun, but like many puns the resemblance between the two sounds is not an accident. East and Easter are cousins, the descendants of a common ancestor. It is a pun, but more than a pun.

With a little prodding, Skeat's Concise Etymological Dictionary yields the following bits of information, or most of them.

LUMEN CHRISTI

The Sanscrit word *USRA*, meaning a ray of light, is the common grandparent. East is the point of the compass, the airt as it was called before we had compasses, where ray appears. USRA became, in prehistoric Greek ausosa, the dawn, which became in the AEolian dialect Auos, in the Ionian Eos, and in Latin Aurora, all names for Rosy—fingered Dawn who rises from her bed in the East. *Dawn* and *Day* are both from another root DHEGH, which means to burn or be bright. Day is the hot or bright time, and to dawn is to become day.

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IUDICIO

Parenthetically it is interesting to notice the etymological expression of the analogy between the daily cycle and the yearly cycle.

Dawn - Day Spring or Spring of the Day.
Spring - Year Spring or Spring of the Year.
Eve - Nightfall or Fall of the Night.
Autumn - Year Fall or Fall of the Year.

The word Easter also descends from USRA, appearing in the Anglo Saxon name of a pagan goddess, Eastre, whose festival was celebrated at the vernal equinox, one of the two days when the sun rises due East. The other day is the autumnal equinox, but as that comes in the fall, in the evening of the

year when all nature is preparing for its long winter sleep, that is no time to celebrate sunrise. We learn this about the goddess Eastre from the Venerable Bede, in Chapter 15 of his book, *De Tempora Ratione.*

The Jewish Sabbath was, and is, on the Saturday. As we all know the Christian day of rest was transferred to the following day in perpetual remembrance of Our Lord's glorious Resurrection. In honor of his title as Sun of Justice, the day of His rising was called the Sun-day. Just as, at the winter solstice, when the rising sun stops in his gradual northerly progress, and begins to move once more toward his own region of the south, just as He is then addressed in the O Antiphon as *O Rising Sun, O Oriens,* so each week we celebrate His Rising by naming this special day after the Sun. Easter is not merely the most important Sunday, but all Sundays are so named because of Easter, because of the event which St. Paul tells us is the most important Christian fact.

And so the early English Christians did what was customary throughout the early Church, and baptized the pagan custom. They kept the solar symbolism with which the people were familiar, and gave it its full Christian signification. They called the chief Christian festival by the name of the old pagan goddess, lest the analogies between Sun and Sunrise, Christ and the Resurrection, be forgotten. And so we speak today not of the Pascal Time, as do most Europeans, but of Easter Time; not of Pascal day, but of Easter Sunday, the Day of the Sun when the Sun Rises due East.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. "What books dealing specifically with the correct notion of art do you think are indispensable to the small Catholic college library? I do not mean books on "how to do it." We have far too many of these as it is. I mean the books which deal with the philosophy of art, and the theoretical foundation of a traditional Christian art. Could you make a list of, say, thirty books?"

A. It would be good if we could make a list of thirty such books, but we do not know of that many. However, we can list those we know and can recommend.

JACQUES MARITAIN, *Art and Scholasticism.* Fr. John O'Connor's translation, St. Dominic's Press, Ditchling, England, 1923, has long been out-of-print. It was important in Eric Gill's development as an art philosopher. The only translation now available is published by Sheed & Ward, New York, 1930.

A. K. COOMARASWAMY

Medieval Aesthetic, 1 & 11, The Art Bulletin XVII, 1935 and XX 1938.

The Transformation of Nature in Art.

The Christian and Oriental or True Philosophy of Art. John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1939.

Is Art a Superstition or a Way of Life? John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1937.

These last two were made part of a collection of essays:

Why Exhibit Works of Art? Luzac and Co., London, 1943.

ERIC GILL

Art. XXth Century Library 1934.

Christianity and the Machine Age. Macmillan Co., New York, 1940.

Sacred and Secular in Art and Industry. John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1939.

Work and Culture. John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1938 & 1944.

Work and Leisure. Faber & Faber, London 1935.

W. R. Lethaby.

Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, 1892, Mac Millan, New York.

Form in Civilization. 1922.

ADE DE BETHUNE

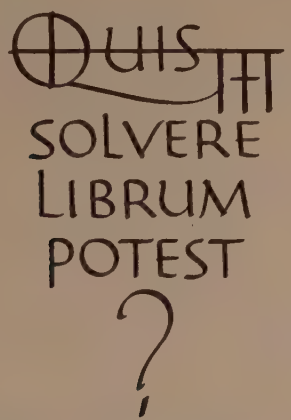
Work. John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1938.

WALTER SHEWRING

Topics.

GRAHAM CAREY

The Majority Report on Art. John Stevens, Newport, R. I. 1937, 1942.



Q. "What has art philosophy to say about neatness? It seems to me that many artists are quite untidy people; and yet neatness must be good, and in some way connected to real art."

A. *Neatness* and *tidiness* are more or less synonymous with *order.*

Things have to be related to one another in *some* kind of pattern, simple or complex. If the things are in an arrangement that can easily be grasped by and retained in the mind, so that a mental pattern corresponds closely to the physical pattern outside the mind, then the mental pattern is said to be *true*, and the objects are said to be in order. If, on the other hand, the objects are thrown together by chance in a very complicated way, the mind cannot grasp or remember their arrangement, cannot therefore have a true picture of it, and the things are said to be in disorder, untidy. without neatness. This is the formal aspect of the problem.

It also has a practical or useful aspect. Things in a simple and true pattern can be handled without confusion. We can use them as they should be used, without waste or distress. It is *better*, more good, to have them so arranged.

So we see that order is related not only to truth, but to goodness.

But *some* kinds of order are more important than others. A person does wrong to insist upon the perfection of a superficial order, when it conflicts with the demands of a deeper and more vital order, or with charity. Thus a woman who keeps her house so neat and tidy, that it is impossible for her family to live or work there, is putting a petty order in the place of a great one. In so reversing values she is neither just nor charitable.

A great many artists are constitutionally unfitted for the perfecting of certain petty orders. According to the language of Professor Sheldon's method for classifying temperaments, most artists are *Cerebrotonics*, and are thus the class of people which finds if difficult to form habits, and to adapt their lives to routines which are so easy to acquire for each of the other human types, the *Viscerotonics* and the *Somatotonics*.

Q. "If culture has a religious basis why is it that there are so many "cultured" people who apparently have very little if any religion? Will you please explain this?"

A. The word culture has many meanings. In this Question it is used in two different senses.

Christopher Dawson* writes that "A culture is a spiritual community which owes its unity to common beliefs and a common attitude to life." This is a broad definition, which may include low as well as high cultures, those with very little understanding of God as well as those with much. If we define culture at its highest, we will also understand most easily the other meanings of the word.

Cultured, or cultivated, people are those who are farthest removed from the subhuman animals. The faculties that differentiate man from the lower animals are intelligence and will. People may be said to be cultured (have a culture) when they have knowledge of the spiritual significances in and behind material things (such knowledge being the result of intelligence) and use their will to implement that knowledge. When large social groups use their intelligence and will suchwise the result is a

* Age of the Gods p. 22.

cultured society. If the culture is handed on from generation to generation a traditional culture is formed.

People and peoples who possess such insight normally wish to give thanks to God first, then to help their neighbors to the possession of the graces they possess. Whence comes the whole affair of symbolism, symbols being an expression of the spiritual through the material as St. Thomas tells us in the Summa (I, 1, 9.) "..... spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likensess of material things." Hence comes that whole side of traditional art which deals with the expression of metaphysical and religious truths. The things produced by these arts have a certain interior rightness, and are therefore beautiful, and capable of arousing aesthetic pleasure.

Then there are other cultures (in the broadest sense) which have little grasp of spiritual truths, have little symbolism, have impoverished arts, and therefore the things they produce are lacking in beauty. The people of such cultures (or many of them) feel a hunger for the beauty of man-made things which should be their human heritage. Their own cultures destroys beauty in nature and produces ugliness by its arts. But in their hearts the human hunger for rightness in things nevertheless remains.

Such, in general, are the "cultured" people of an irreligious "culture." When they can, they possess themselves of the beautiful artifacts made by the people of real cultures, though they are ignorant of the meaning of the things whose only use to them is aesthetic. And so the world is ransacked for the benefit of the conoisseur and the art museum. Collectors' pieces are brought back to feed the hunger of a few people who do not know how to make a culture of their own. The pieces may still retain much of their beauty, but they have lost their goodness. They may still be KALOS but are no longer AGATHOS, those two words which the Greeks liked to write together in one—KALOSKAGATHOS—good *and* beautiful. They are without practical use or intellectual meaning, but henceforth for enjoyment only. The cultured society from which these pieces came is made the poorer, and the uncultured society to which they go is not really enriched.

Q. "What is the proper style of architecture for modern American Catholic churches? We see many styles used, but they do not all seem to be equally successful."

A. There is no "proper style of architecture" for Catholic churches or for that matter anything else. Any real and legitimate "style" is the expression of the needs and ideas of a people expressed in the techniques which are

natural to that people. In other words, the patterns of the Catholic religion and the needs of the Catholic worship express themselves with whatever materials and methods and skills are natural to the builders of a particular time and place. As the patterns and the needs are quite simple, almost any technique can express them. As there is an enormous number of materials and means of shaping materials, there is an enormous number of valid "styles". The only "styles" which are not good, are those which do not express ideas and fulfill needs, but which copy the accidents of other styles. They are not basing themselves on causes, but on effects.

The true Catholic tradition of sacred architecture is one of constant change, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions in the physical world surrounding it. There is no inherent Catholicity in any arrangement of stones, or any arrangement of space enclosed by the walls into which stones may be built up. In Southern countries where the sun is high and there is much light and heat—too much—flat or low-pitched roofs with wide eaves are good, and small windows and correspondingly big wall spaces. Such were the conditions in Italy that developed the true Italian styles of building, and of painting upon walls. But in the North, steep roofs to shed off rain and snow, short eaves that will not form ice gutters, large expanses of glass and a minimum of wall space are an equally logical result. Gothic is as reasonable in northern France as classical is in Italy and Greece.

In some situations the faithful have had to take the buildings, or the style of the buildings, already present in their society. So it was with the Basilica. At other times the Catholic builders have evolved something quite new, as the Romanesque. In other words the Catholic tradition of building is an expression of the Catholic principle that the means exist to serve the end, and that any means, not intrinsically evil, are good if they do achieve that end.

The end of building churches is that God's creatures should be brought closer to God, by means of the Eucharistic sacrifice and banquet which Christ appointed for that purpose. Any materials, any shape of materials, must be good if they fulfill this Christian function.

SCRIPTI SUNT IN
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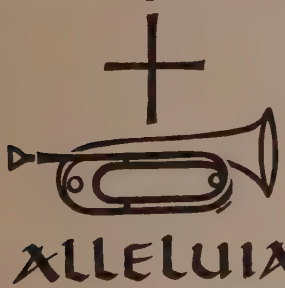
BOOKS
OF ART AND POETRY

JACQUES MARITAIN. POETRY, LONDON; 6;—

A great while ago (or so it seems) Jacques Maritain published his *Art and Scholasticism*, and to many readers revealed for the first time a traditional theory of art which had been almost completly overlaid by the misty thinking of modern times. That service deserved and deserves our gratitude, but I hope that it is not discourteous to add that Maritain's development as a writer on aesthetics has proved somewhat disappointing as compared with his general philosophic growth. His *Degrees of Knowledge* reaches a height of thought which could scarcely have been prophesied for the early polemist against Luther and Rousseau. But his later aesthetic writings show no comparable advance; interesting though they are (and increasingly subtle), they seem rather to obscure than to illuminate the original Thomistic thesis.

It would be impossible here, and tedious in any case, to substantiate this complaint in detail. Maritain remains a Thomist, and there are few passages of his which might not be defended as 'orthodox'. But the general impression given is that of a drift towards what Eric Gill called 'beauty-mongering' (though I do not forget how much Gill himself owed to Maritain), of a taste not sufficiently mortified, of too ready an acquiescence (despite incidental protests) in the claims and judgments of the 'art world' of Paris. And I think that the poet of *Lauda Sion* would have heard with some astonishment that "Poetry is to art what grace is to moral life".



There are valuable things in the present book, notable a discussion of the novel in *Dialogues*, and certain passages of the *Freedom of Song* (that on God's knowledge of creatures is magnificent; the real Maritain). But the appraisals of particular artists and the allusions to them are often unconvincing, if not embarrassing—at least in their translated form.

For it remains to be said that the author has been premature in congratulating his translator. Heaven knows it must be no easy task to translate Maritain, above all when his style takes a whimsical or romantic turn. "Nothing is firmer, warmer, more dovetailed, than the handclasp of the airplaining couple by which they hold one another up in the open air". (p. 9). Though that is not English, it is difficult to say what the English would be. But too often the translator has simply not understood the French. On p. 23, 'Severini can find' stands for 'Severini may feel'. On p. 30 a seemingly outrageous definition 'Because art (that which is true) reflects morality' has replaced the innocent statement, 'because art reflects morality (as of course it does)'. I leave it to the reader to emend a phrase from p. 34: 'A straightforward gaze before which the heart spreads like a deployed campaign'.

WALTER SHEWRING

WHO'S WHO and WHAT'S WHAT

MABEL C. LIVINGSTON studied dramatic arts both abroad and in the United States. For many years she gave her services to church and settlement dramatic groups. Only recently has she taught professionally, at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, The New York School of the Theatre, and Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart in New York City.

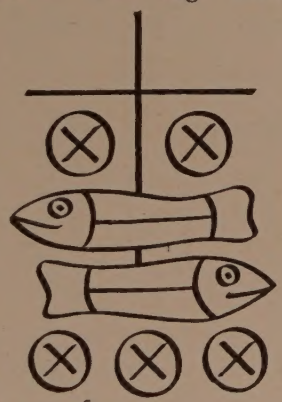
Graham Carey left the city. He went to the country, and on the Vermont soil established his farm. Sunrise Farm, as the foundation of "Heliopolis"—a self-subsistent Christian community. Such a community will naturally need its own parish church, and he and Father Catich have often discussed the building of that church. In their plans, they have not been satisfied with being merely conventional, but have sought into the causes of things and have attempted to do nothing without reason. For example: a church has to face some direction; is there not a *reason* why it should face some *particular* direction? Should not a building derive its form from the function which it is to serve? And is it not apparent that the altar is the heart and hearth of the church? Or are altar and priest to be backed rudely against the wall, thus to hide, as it were, the central fact of Christian worship from the worshipful community?

It was as a result of such discussions that the chairman of the advisory board of the C. A. A., Mr. Graham Carey, and its president, Father Catich, came to collaborate on "Central Altar," the first part of which features our current issue.

C. A. A. NOTES

The Catholic Art Association convention at Mount Saint Joseph College, Cincinnati, Ohio, offered in the main discussions of the liturgy in relation to Catholic art and life. Sister Augusta, regional director, said that "the convention showed a definite awakening through the whole region to the importance and understanding of Catholic art."

The Rev. Raban Hathorn, O. S. B., St. Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana, in explaining the Liturgy, whose living center is the Holy Eucharist, commented at length on the recent Encyclical of Pius XII on the Mystical Body. "Once the doctrine of the Whole Christ—Head and Members—is grapsed," he said, "then the divine life of the Whole Christ becomes as simple as the idea of human life in the human body. Then shall we more clearly understand the relationship of each individual soul with God and with his neighbor; then too will the idea of the spiritual life of each individual become clearer to us, and in particular the importance of an intelligent understanding of the liturgy in connection with that spiritual life."



Following his address, Rev. Claude Ehringer, O. S. B., also of St. Meinrad's, told the convention that the art of any age is an index of its particular brand of piety. He said that the mind of the Church, artistically expressed in the Church's own art-form—the Liturgy—should be the mind of the Christian artist when he is conceiving and executing his work. And "if Christian art is essentially social," he said, "the holy Liturgy must fulfill her obligation of tearing from the soul of the artist the selfish expression of his own ego."

Sister Jane Catherine, O. S. U., Mary Manse College, Toledo, Ohio, sees the Liturgy as a possible integrating factor in the whole Catholic curriculum and in art courses in particular. She explained that the elementary school offers wide possibilities for pictorializing Catholic truths. An art lesson on drawing animals becomes an activity on Creation and Noah's ark illustrations. In the liturgical round, the Christmas story, the Epiphany, and the finding in the temple, taught seasonally anyhow, provide seasonal subjects for the art class.

"Again, symbolism, even for younger children, is a most effective visual aid in teaching abstract truth," she said.

Brother Louis J. Weber, S. M., Purcell High School, Cincinnati, Ohio, presented a core curriculum in art as planned for his high school. According to Brother Louis, art occupies an important place in secondary education. It educates students culturally. It is a means of effective expression. It furthers ones resemblances with God the Creator. It gives to ones thinking the unity, harmony, rhythm, proportion, balance and emphasis which are its guiding principles. It gives all thinking a visual springboard.

But, said Brother Louis, "correct principles of living can be taught through art in a most convincing way. A work of art that embodies some Christian idea requires much thought—meditation—together with clear concise ideas concerning the fundamental truths behind these ideas. To represent them graphically and successfully a high school student must have a crystalized image of them in his mind. Such an image is lasting."

At the luncheon, the Very Rev. Monsignor Carl J. Ryan, diocesan superintendent of schools, told delegates that successful art instruction depends on the teacher and the teacher's understanding of what is good in art. Mr. Philip Adam, director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, opened the forum with comments on religious spirit in art and explained that it need not be confined to religious subjects.

Assisting in the discussion with pert comment that furthered indoctrination of C. A. A. principles were Sister Esther, St. Mary of the Woods, foundress of the Catholic Art Association; Sister Helene, O. P., Studio Angelico, Siena Heights College, Adrian, Michigan; Robert C. Koepnick, Dayton artist; and Stephen Bridges, Romuala Kraus, Maude Philips, E. Paul Wilhelm, Clothilde Zanetta and Carl Zimmerman, Cinncinati artists.

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Dignus es Domine accipere librum et aperire signacula.